

Pastor and People.

THANKSGIVING.

For the sound of waters rushing
In bubbling beads of light;
For the fleets of snow-white lilies
Firm anchored out of sight;
For the reeds among the eddies,
The crystal on the clod;
For the flowing of the rivers,
I thank Thee, O my God!

For the rosebud's break of beauty
Along the toiler's way;
For the violet's eye that opens
To bless the new-born day;
For the bare twigs that in summer
Bloom like the prophet's rod;
For the blossoming of flowers,
I thank Thee, O my God!

For the lifting up of mountains
In brightness and in dead;
For the peaks were snow and sunshine
Alone have dared to tread;
For the dark and silent gorges
Whence mighty cedars nod,
For the majesty of mountains,
I thank Thee, O my God!

For the splendor of the sunsets,
Vast mirrored on the sea;
For the gold-fringed clouds that curtain
Heaven's inner majesty;
For the molten bars of twilight,
Where thought leans glad, yet awed;
For the glory of the sunsets,
I thank Thee, O my God!

For the earth and all its beauty,
The sky and all its light;
For the dim and soothing shadows
That rest the dazzled sight;
For unfading fields and prairies,
Where sense in vain has trod;
For the world's exhaustless beauty,
I thank Thee, O my God!

For an eye of inward seeing,
A soul to know and love;
For these common aspirations
That our high heirship prove;
For the hearts that bless each other
Beneath Thy smile, Thy rod;
For the amaranth saved from Eden,
I thank Thee, O my God!

For the hidden scroll, o'erwritten
With one dear name adored
For the heavenly in the human,
The Spirit in the Word;
For the tokens of Thy presence
Within, above, abroad;
For Thine own great gift of being,
I thank Thee, O my God.

Written for THE CANADA PRESBYTERIAN

INDIVIDUALITY AND DISCIPLESHIP.

BY REV. W. G. JORDAN, STRATHROY.

Even when the grace of God has begun to work in our hearts it is not an easy thing to live a well-balanced, symmetrical life. We are all too prone to pride ourselves upon our special accomplishments and easy abstinences. Our religion is not a mere self-culture working from without, bowing itself to the restraints of a shallow social etiquette, while the real problem of life is left unsolved and the deepest needs of the soul ignored. It is a God-given life destined to leaven the whole being, but such a life has its own culture. We must "work out our own salvation with fear and trembling," because it is "God that worketh in us to will and to do of His good pleasure." The indwelling of the Divine Spirit implies the out-reaching of the human spirit after all that is lovely in thought and life. In this there are two factors, two points from which we can view the manifestation of life and the perfecting of character. There is the fact of discipleship and the growth of the individual along the line of his peculiar God-given powers. We hear considerable discussion just now about protecting "the Protestant Religion." Without discussing party movements we may remark in passing that it is important to protect our religion from the inside by declaring clearly the sweet evangel concerning personal salvation in Christ, by teaching our children to face solemnly the great facts upon which our faith is founded, and by training our young people to a thoughtful life which is informed and guided by those principles so fully revealed in the words of the Master and the teaching of the Apostle Paul. Let us dwell for a brief space on one of these points. The development of Christian manhood requires these two things—discipleship and individuality. The first thing in our Christian experience is our submission to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,

the most important thing is our constant loyalty to Him. In this self-surrender and service the soul finds a quickening force which impels it along the path of real progress. In this way the redeemed man will find his true individuality, unless his life is overlaid by church authority or social conventions. As a matter of theory, there will always be discussions between the socialist and the individualist. It is not easy at any time to mark out "a scientific frontier" dividing the realm of church authority from the sphere of individual conscience. This question cannot be settled by a formula but by living, and the faithful, intelligent disciple is in a position to deal with it because the authority of Christ blends with the life of the soul and stimulates its highest powers. What is meant may be made clearer by the example of a man with whom we are familiar rather than by an abstract statement. When we study the life of Paul, "the apostle of the Gentiles," we see at once, without any minute analysis, the presence of these two forces; he is so much a disciple that he can say, "I live, yet not I, Christ liveth in me." But how clear it is in this case that the "I" is not lost, is not enslaved, but made free and brought into a large place. When we think of the education that this man had in his youth we are astonished at his boldness, independence and breadth of view. He will consider the needs of weaker men and the convictions of his brethren, but he is determined at all hazards to stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made him. Like Amos and other great "men of light and leading" he stands for the rights of the individual conscience against the tyranny of petty rules or the censorious judgment of narrow-minded men. Unlike men of small soul he does not seek for himself the authority which he resists in others, "not for that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy." We do not claim perfection for the apostle, the full-orbed, perfect manhood is found only in the Son of Man, but this "chosen vessel," rich in life and abundant in labours, is a fine example of the union in Christian experience of subjection to Christ and a large personal life.

All awakened men feel their need of a leader; what is called hero-worship, has its root in this fact. The men who, in their hatred of priest-craft, fiercely reject all forms of church-life, are not free from this law. They have their "popes" to whom they render a more subservient worship than we are prepared to render to any mere human guide. Comte, Spencer and Huxley have not only intelligent admirers who recognize their limitations, they have also blind, bigoted devotees. We may, perhaps, be allowed to stretch a point and say this also is well and shows us that even in these matters "one touch of nature makes the whole world kin." Our hearts hunger for the heaven-sent leader, the rightful Lord of our souls. And when men tell us that they have no school for our souls and that we must feed our hearts upon the fleeting things which only seem to be, we cry with Peter, "Lord, to whom shall we go, Thou hast the words of eternal life." An indirect testimony to our Lord's divinity which does not come within the scope of ordinary theological proofs is met with just here. He holds a place which is all his own. He satisfies the hearts of those who come to Him, and while the surrender of the soul abjectly to any church system or any ecclesiastical leader, however great, degrades that soul, the complete submission of the heart to Christ is the way to life and freedom. If, with Paul, I can claim to be the bond-slave of Christ, I am on the way to an ever-deepening and expanding life. Our Lord has the characteristic of the highest leader. He can attract. When He is lifted up He draws men unto Him. But He stands the test as no others can; the men of deepest insight, of largest thoughts, of quickest sympathies are found among those who have been most completely subject unto Him.

In these days we need to resist mere conventionality in religion, we need to encourage not conceited singularity, but healthful individuality. In the days of the Reformation the individual soul, with its rights, privileges and responsibilities, was re-discovered, discovered in the sense in which the prophet Amos and the apostle Paul presented it to the thoughts of men. The mystics may have proved in

solitude that they had souls, but they did nothing for the emancipation of their fellow-men. And as in all other crises the world was not saved by the critics, but by those who felt that they had heard God's voice and must echo it in their own feeble fashion. That side of the truth has its dangers; there is no need to deny that fanaticism and licence are great evils, and we are not afraid to admit that doctrines of liberty, even when handled by the ablest teachers, may be ignorantly or wilfully misunderstood. Such teaching places great honor upon the individual man and demands from him a sincere submission of himself to God. Now, whatever our theories may be, we know that the present kind of society is towards "socialism," if we may use a word which is all the more useful because it is so vague. People who have a perfect hatred to socialism in the political sense of that word, say and do things which men of the last generation would have rejected as socialistic. The spirit of the time affects us all; this idea that the corporate whole ought to do things which were formerly left to the individual unit is growing. This will probably go on until it works its own cure and some of us have to turn back to find a truth which we have forgotten, a truth which in the past has cost the noblest soul much anguish when they have felt their best life strangled in them by the ruthless force of a mechanical church. In some of the older civilizations the city was everything and the citizens nothing, but we cannot go back to that. Our social elevation must come to us, not through the sacrifice, but through the enrichment of the individual life. Here the prospect is tempting, there is a great space in which we might wander and deal with specific questions. Our business now, however, is with general principles. We would have our young men to realize that the way to find the highest individuality is to find Christ. He is not the Lord of a sect, the Ruler of a clique, He is the King of men, of man as God made him, and as God would have him be. In Him men find their true selves and prove that religion is not a narrowing but an enlarging of their life. Those who are true to Him cannot be false to the laws which govern the highest manhood. Their life is from within; they live from the prompting of a renewed spirit and not under the bondage of minute external regulations; they live under a law which does not depress, but stimulates their life; they have bowed before a King whose service is freedom.

THE JUBILEE OF THE Y.M.C.A.

In anticipation of this event, which is to be celebrated in June next, the *Christian Commonwealth* has interviewed Mr. George Williams, the founder and president of the association, and from the conference with him we extract the following:—Fifty years ago a few young men met in a small upper house of Messrs. George Hitchcock & Co., St. Paul's Churchyard, and there constituted themselves into a Young Men's Christian Association. From his early days, Mr. Williams was full of spiritual enthusiasm, and upon entering as an assistant in 1841, the firm of Messrs. Hitchcock & Co., soon made his influence felt. Something of the nature of a religious revival took place under the shadow of St. Paul's. Mr. Hitchcock was converted, and heartily encouraged the formation of the Y.M.C.A. "It is our year of jubilee," said Mr. Williams, "and we welcome its advent with unspeakable joy and devout gratitude. We are now making preparations to appropriately celebrate the auspicious event. In June—the month in which the Y.M.C.A. was born—a Jubilee International Conference will be held in Exter Hall, when about 2,000 delegates are expected—representatives from every country where associations exist—and we are anticipating gatherings of interest and usefulness, such as we have never before experienced." As to the aim of the Y.M.C.A., he said—"It should never be forgotten that the chief characteristic of our work is that it is a spiritual work. This is its distinguishing glory. We are prepared to adapt our methods to the constantly-changing requirements of the times, but we believe that spiritual results can only be accomplished by spiritual means. The main object of the Y.M.C.A. is to lead young

men to the Saviour. If we are the means of spiritual usefulness to young men, we benefit them in every way. They are better able to control themselves, and become better business men—this I have proved over and over again—they are placed upon a higher platform, both for this life and the life which is to come. They thus become as the salt to preserve, and as the light to diffuse Christ's teaching among those with whom they associate, and become true helpers to whatever section of the church of Christ they may belong, and to the great missionary cause. Hundreds of young men who have been brought to the Saviour by the agency of the Y.M.C.A., have gone forth to the mission field. During the past year 95 young men have gone from the ranks of the English Associations to devote their lives to foreign and home mission work, and to the Christian ministry. Only to-day I met with two young fellows, both members of the Association, who at the end of this month hope to go out to Tibet as missionaries of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. I am convinced—and I speak from long experience—that the greatest good you can do to a young man is to induce him to yield his heart unreservedly to Christ." Comparing the young of to-day with those of the time when he was a young man, Mr. Williams says: "I think they have greatly improved. The young men found to-day in the great houses in the city, are altogether a better type than they were when I commenced business life in this house, 53 years ago. There is a much higher tone about them; there is not so much intemperance or immorality as there was." "And as regards industry, honesty, punctuality, and trustworthiness?" "An improvement there, too; indeed, it is so from every standpoint. Whenever a man has been influenced spiritually, he necessarily becomes a better servant, and discharges his duties more thoroughly and with greater satisfaction to his employer." Regarding the benefit such associations may be to young men, Mr. Williams considers "a young man of high principle, who is also persevering and capable, is pretty sure to make his way. Of course, there are some who lack the gift, and beyond a certain point would not succeed anywhere. If a young man gets under the influence of the Young Men's Christian Association, he is improved immensely in every way. It sharpens his intellect, helps him to preserve his health and vigor, makes him a reliable, trusty man, and thus contributes to his success. I am constantly meeting with men," said Mr. Williams, "who many years ago came under the influence of the Association, and they testify that the benefits they received from it have helped them all through their after life."

A SPIRITUAL MYSTERY.

BY REV. O. H. WETTERBERG.

Rev. Dr. Burdett Hart, in referring to Christ's use of the vine and its branches, as a type of the relation existing between him and his people, says, "When by faith the soul takes hold of him, his life streams into that soul, as when a cutting is grafted into the parent stock, the life of the stock flows into the engrafted wood, and it becomes thenceforward a part of the one growth. Christ's life through faith comes into humanity, and all human souls, joined to Him by faith, become Christian souls, partakers of Christ, one with Him. This is mystery, but mystery is everywhere; and this spiritual mystery is no more unsolvable than the mysterious processes which are before our eyes in natural growths, and which change all around us." Of course it is not. The man who says that he rejects Christianity because of its mysteries, ought, for precisely the same reason, to reject all natural growth, processes and alterations. Indeed, with as much sense and propriety, he should reject the fact that he is a man, as to reject Christianity on the ground of mystery, for he himself is a bundle of mysteries, from beginning to end. Now, the vital union of Christ and the believer is exactly on the same principle as is the union between a vine and its branches. There is not a whit more mystery in one case than in the other. The life of the branches is the life of the vine. And all the real claim that any man has to being a Christian, rests on the fact that he has the life of Christ in him; and the proof of this must be found in the fruit which he bears.